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AUTHOR Berg, Marlowe; And Others
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ABSTRACT

To strengthen the performance and commitment of beginning teachers by improving the supervision and support student teachers receive, the California State University established the Clinical Supervision Initiative (CSI) in 1984. This paper describes the Far West Laboratory Mini-Studies investigation of beginning teachers. The triad study constituted a two-year investigation of the use of clinical supervision practices during preservice training and its effect on beginning teacher performance. Clinical supervision requires a professional relationship among university supervisor, cooperating teacher, and student teacher. The clinical supervision component was designed to add to the triad relationship a clearer sense of role and responsibility in preservice training and a commitment to student teacher self-evaluation. A description is given of a clinical supervision model--Partners in Supervision. A concern of the study was to identify the problems and problem-solving actions of novice teachers and explore the impact of socialization mechanisms on problem-solving approaches. The positive relationship found between the impact of preservice supervision and problem-solving reported by beginning teachers who were clinically supervised suggests that training in self-analysis of the teaching experience can have an important transfer to problem-solving in the first year of teaching. (JD)

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THE EFFECT OF PRESERVICE CLINICAL SUPERVISION ON BEGINNING TEACHERS

Marlowe Berg
Diane S. Murphy
Anne Nagel
Ida Malian

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BACKGROUND

In 1984, the Chancellor of the California State University announced five reform goals in teacher education. One of the five goals was to strengthen the performance and commitment of beginning teachers by improving the supervision and support the student teachers receive. In the two years that followed the chancellor's announcement, the CSU invested close to $8 million in programs intended to achieve that goal system-wide. The university broad policy and program goal was to improve the success and satisfaction of beginning teachers through the Clinical Supervision Initiative (CSI). This would represent a strategic choice by universities to concentrate their institutional resources on improvements in student teaching. That choice was based on certain claims including the following:

> Beginning teachers who receive close (clinical) supervision and support during their student teaching experience will demonstrate a greater intellectual grasp of teaching, greater technical proficiency, and firmer personal commitment to teaching than beginning teachers who are left to struggle on their own. (Mata, et, al., 1988)

The investigation of the impact of the Clinical Supervision Initiative on the performance and satisfaction of beginning teachers was multifaceted. The Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development collected data across the university system from beginning teachers who had been involved with the CSI. Individual specially funded programs, such as the San Diego State University Partners in Supervision, focused on this aspect as an integral part of the internal evaluation of program effect.

This paper describes the Far West Laboratory Mini-Studies investigation of beginning teachers from the specially funded credential programs across the California State University system, and the SDSU Partners in Supervision Project's beginning teacher study.

FAR WEST LABORATORY MINI-STUDIES AT SPECIALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS: A FOLLOW-UP OF THE TRIAD RELATIONSHIP

The triad study constituted a two-year investigation of the use of clinical supervision practices during preservice training and its effect on beginning teacher performance. Clinical supervision requires a professional relationship among university supervisor, cooperating teacher and student teacher. This "triad" is the hub of support, guidance and instruction for student teachers. The clinical supervision component was designed to add to the triad relationship a clearer sense of role and responsibility in preservice training and a commitment to student teacher self-evaluation.

During the year two of the CSI each of the six specially funded programs selected two triads to participate in the study (N=12). The selection criteria were as follows:

- that both university supervisor and cooperating teacher participated in supervision workshops and were committed to using the techniques that had been introduced
- that the university supervisor had a reduced supervision ratio
- that the student teacher had completed at least one other student teaching placement

Three surveys in an eight to twelve week period were administered to each triad member and two on-site interviews were

conducted. Data were gathered early, midway and near the completion of the student teaching placement. These data were primarily used as supplementary and anecdotal information to help interpret the baseline survey data collected on the reporting triads. It was also used as the baseline data source for the mini-studies follow up of the triad study student teachers.

The mini-studies data collection efforts were aimed at gathering information about the performance and professional commitment of student teachers who were part of the triad study and hence became beginning teachers. The Beginning Teacher Survey was administered and a telephone interview was conducted upon completion of their first semester of teaching (N=7). It should be noted that these beginning teachers received the fullest treatment the CSI offered since they were supervised by faculty and cooperating teachers who had participated in the training interventions. School principals were also interviewed to supplement the self-reports.

As student teachers, the triad study participants reported feeling confident in their ability to effectively discipline and reward students, understand and present subject matter and develop a good rapport with the students in their classroom. They did report a shared concern, and nagging apprehension about what it takes to become an excellent and effective teacher.

As beginning teachers, the mini-studies participants reported that they made significant improvements in the general areas of curriculum and instruction, classroom organization and addressing special student needs. Beginning teachers were convinced that their ability to manage the classroom and discipline students had improved, but that inprovement was still necessary to consistently and effectively maintain order. Their assessment of their own performance was consistently weakest, however, in their ability to effectively teach students with special and diverse learning needs.

During their first year of teaching, the mini-studies beginning teachers knew how to pool resources and seek assistance when they felt unsure about a particular substantive area or professional responsibility. They reported feeling comfortable seeking assistance from colleagues, the principal, the resource and mentor teachers. Most welcomed the opportunity to be observed teaching and interacting with students, and to receive feedback from colleagues or administrators during a post-observation conference. Observations were considered a valued tool to facilitate and gauge professional improvement.

Principals at schools with the mini-studies beginning teachers reported that this group exhibited self-diagnostic skills and the ability to improve their own teaching and seek assistance at a higher level than the average beginning teacher.

Overall, the beginning teachers considered their teaching experience by the midway point to be "good" or "very good". Their school principal concurred, rating the mini-studies beginning teachers as "good" to "excellent" in performance and among the most well-prepared and professional beginning teachers they have worked with. Some principals made an explicit link between the high rating and the clinical supervision that the beginning teachers received during their preservice training. They cited that the beginning teachers used a common language which was useful for supervision and professional discourse. They established a good rapport with their students and colleagues, and were generally comfortable with the supervision process. Responsive listening, appreciating feedback, seeking appropriate assistance and using self-assessment skills were residual signs of being clinically supervised. Other principals, who were not familiar with clinical supervision, were unable to make this link. They did, however, agree that these behaviors generally characterized their beginning teachers.

Generalizable conclusions from such a small sample are tentative. Nevertheless, there are strong indicators that student

teachers transfer their clinical supervision experience into their first year of teaching. The mini-studies beginning teachers demonstrated that even without their university supervisor and cooperating teacher to confer with, they sought assistance from colleagues, were responsive to feedback and engaged in self assessment as a source for and gauge of improvement. Principals corroborated these behavioral characteristics, and either explicitly or implicitly linked them with clinical supervision or simply acknowledged that they were welcomed traits in beginning teachers.

PARTNERS IN SUPERVISION: A CLINICAL SUPERVISION MODEL PROGRAM

A major component of the Clinical Supervision initiative involved funding special programs at six campuses in the California State University system. San Diego State University's Partners in Supervision was one of these programs. The Partners project was developed as a K-6 training model for university supervisors, district master teachers and student teacher implement collaborative supervision practices based on the Cogan (1969) Goldhammer (1973) models of clinical supervision. The training model emphasized a framework that provided for the systematic observation of instruction and the delivery of objective feedback to the student teacher within the context of a shared examination of learning to teach. Supervisors and master teachers were trained together in elements of clinical supervision, which focused on establishing a collegial relationship and the reflective analysis of the teaching act. Student teachers received instruction in the elements of clinical supervision in a student teaching seminar.

The three participants in the supervision process, the triad members (university supervisors, master teachers, and student teachers) engaged in goal setting conferences to establish the parameters of their responsibilities and to designate times for implementing cycles of clinical supervision. These cycles included a pre-observation conference, observation, analysis and strategy,

postobservation conference and postobservation analysis. A minimum of three complete cycles of clinical supervision with other informal observations and coaching interactions was the agreed upon organization for supervision during the eight week full time semester experience of the student teacher.

While the main focus of the Partners program was the development of a collaborative supervisory relationship for the purposes of supporting and extending the student teacher, a critical concern at the inception of the project was what impact such an intervention would have on the performance of the student teachers as beginning classroom teachers. To obtain this information a follow-up study of year one participants in the Partners in Supervision Project was conducted.

The purpose of the study was to identify the problems and problem-solving actions of novice teachers and to explore the impact of socialization mechanisms on problem-solving approaches. Socialization within education was defined as the process by which the attitudes, beliefs, and values of beginning teachers are integrated into the norms of the profession. The socialization mechanisms considered in this study were preservice supervision, induction, school context, and administrative practices. The following questions were addressed by the study:

1. What types of problems are identified as significant by teachers in the first year of teaching?
2. What types of problem-solving actions are taken by first year teachers in order to solve the identified problems?
3. Do the actions taken in response to these problems represent a rationalized technique or a reflective, analytic approach to problem-solving?
4. How are the socialization mechanisms of preservice supervision, induction, school context, and administrative practices perceived as influencing the problem-solving approaches of novice teachers?

5. In what ways do novice teachers who were evaluated as outstanding in student teaching respond differently than those who were evaluated as less than outstanding?

A random sample of 20 graduates engaged in their 2nd. year of teaching were interviewed. These respondents represented 7 school districts and 18 schools. The sample was stratified to include 10 teachers who had been clinically supervised and 10 teachers who had been traditionally supervised in the preservice student teaching experience. In order to accommodate for possible variation of supervisory style within the categories of clinical and traditional supervision, definitions utilizing Goldsberry's schema of nominal, prescriptive, reflective, and developmental supervision were explained and the subjects were asked to identify the type of supervision they received. The definitions are:

Nominal: Supervisor provides supervision for show...no real quality.

Prescriptive: Supervisor (as expert) observes, diagnoses, affirms strengths and prescribes changes.

Reflective: Supervisor (as facilitator) encourages student teacher to develop skills in self-assessment and analysis of the instructional experience.

Developmental: Combination of prescriptive and reflective. (Goldberry, 1988)

A structured interview instrument was developed, piloted with 3 novice teachers who were not part of the randomly selected sample, and modified to incorporate suggestions. Each member of the sample was individually interviewed. Their responses were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The data was examined to identify the problems and the degree of reflection and analysis teachers utilized in solving problems. Analysis was based on Schon's categorization of reflective practices. (See Figure 1). Teacher's perceptions of the socialization mechanisms were

identified and explored in relation to the impact these mechanisms had on their approaches to problem-solving. In addition, responses of those received outstanding evaluations in student teaching were compared with those who received less than outstanding ratings.

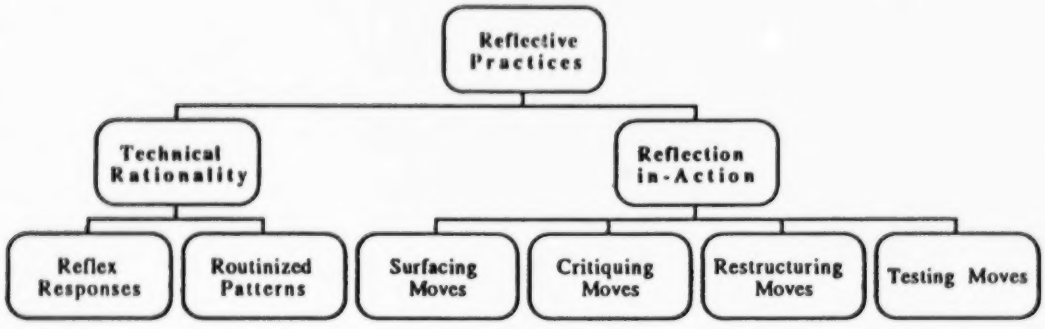

Figure 1: A Diagram of Reflective Practices

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The most significant problems encountered in the initial year of teaching included issues related to: classroom discipline, relations with parents, dealing with severe individual discipline problems of students, heavy teaching load resulting in insufficient preparation time, determining learning levels of students, relations with principals, and large class size.

- The actions taken in response to problems evidenced a developmental process of reflective problem-solving. The initial stage involved a search for and application of rationalized techniques. Interview data confirmed that all respondents engaged in the application of standardized solutions as part of their problem-solving approach. All respondents also engaged in a second stage of reflective experimentation utilizing practices of critiquing, restructuring and testing to analyze the effects of applied techniques. A third stage, identified as mature reflection

characterized by increased knowledge and experiential wisdom, seemed to be facilitated in settings where the experiential wisdom of veteran teachers was integrated with the reflective practices of new teachers as part of the problem-solving process.

- Eighty percent of the teachers who were clinically supervised in preservice training and 20% of those who were traditionally supervised reported having received a reflective model of supervision.

- Seventy percent of those who had reflective supervision (N=7) indicated that it had a positive impact on their problem-solving approaches. All of the teachers who received prescriptive supervision (N=5) during preservice training indicated that supervision had no effect on their approaches to problem-solving.

- Interaction with experienced professionals was hindered when novice teachers and/or veterans had the expectation that learning to teach is accomplished during preservice education as opposed to being an ongoing process. When this expectation was internalized, novice teachers were unwilling to reveal their needs for support and veteran teachers were less likely to anticipate those needs.

- Fifteen of the respondents had mentors as part of an induction program. A shared ideology of teaching and recognized need for support in the mentor/novice teacher relationship were identified as essential factors in influencing the problem-solving approaches of beginning teachers. Other important factors were teaching at or near the same grade level and accessibility for interaction.

- The impact of induction on problem-solving approaches was influenced by factors beyond those connected with preservice supervision such as those the mentor/novice relationship, school context, and administrative practices.

• Courses & seminars provided as part of an induction program were more highly valued if: 1) the content related to the initial stage of problem-solving (i.e., identifying and applying standardized solutions); 2) teachers received released time, financial remuneration, and/or course credit to attend; and 3) the opportunity to interact with other first year teachers was provided.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The actions taken in response to problems conveyed a developmental process of reflective problem-solving. This process includes three stages. The initial stage involves searching for and applying standardized solutions in problem-solving. A second stage includes reflective experimentation utilizing the practices of critiquing, re-structuring, and testing to analyze the effects of applied techniques. A third stage, identified as mature reflection, is characterized by increased knowledge and experiential wisdom (See Figure 1).

Progress from the stage of standardized solutions to the stage of reflective problem-solving was influenced or hindered depending the socialization mechanisms of preservice supervision, induction, school context and administrative practices. The positive relationship between the impact of preservice supervision and problem-solving reported by teachers who were clinically supervised suggests that training in self-analysis of the teaching experience can have an important transfer to problem-solving in the first year experience. Induction programs can extend needed support in this very important process. However, an integration of the experiential wisdom of veteran teachers with the reflective practices of novice teachers is dependent upon establishing an appropriate match particularly in the areas of ideology and commitment to the induction process. School contexts that promote and facilitate collegial and collaborative problem-solving are critical to providing an atmosphere for assistance. This atmosphere is more likely to be created if the administrator considers the

novice status of first year teachers when making assignments and communicates the assumption that the need for assistance is a new teacher norm rather than an evidence of incompetency.

A finding in this study that is particularly disturbing is that the two teachers who were most highly evaluated in their preservice training were those who found the transition into teaching to be most problematic. A record of their comments reveals that the difficulties related primarily to extremely difficult class assignments and isolated school contexts in which professional collegiality was absent. Their accounts emphasize the need for a profession that will welcome and initiate rather than program failure for its newest members.

SUMMARY

A major focus of the current reform movement has been an examination of the impact of close supervision and support on the performance and commitment of beginning teachers. The Far West Laboratory mini-study of beginning teachers looked at teacher behaviors which were characterized as being consistent with supervision that was clinical in nature, and their transfer to the first year experience. Their findings suggest a positive relationship between a clinical supervision experience and the ability to reflect and self-analyze on the act of teaching during the first year in the classroom.

The Partners in Supervision beginning teacher study narrowed its examination to the impact of socialization mechanisms on the teachers' ability to deal with problems, and whether a preservice clinical supervision experience facilitated a more reflective, self-analytic approach to problem solving. As was stated, a positive relationship between the impact of preservice supervision and problem-solving reported by first year teachers suggested that training in self-analysis can transfer to problem-solving in the beginning year. The data also suggest that while clinical supervision did have a positive impact on the problem-solving ability of the novice teachers, factors related to induction, school

context and administrative practices are critical to extending that impact in the initial year of teaching.

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